CLAIM AMENDMENTS

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application or previous response to office action:

1. **(Currently Amended)** Protective circuit, in particular for overvoltage protection for an electronic control system for a motor vehicle, comprising:

- a potential converter with an input and an output, which supplies a supply voltage when fed an external voltage,

- a control unit, which is connected electrically to the supply voltage and to earth,

- a first switch unit, which monitors the external voltage and, when a predetermined voltage threshold value is exceeded, generates a control signal at an input of the control unit, and

- a second switch unit, which is part of the control unit and switches in one or more loads at least partially in response to the control signal at the input,

- wherein one switched in load is the control unit, which is being switched from idle mode to operating mode.

2. **(Canceled)**

3. (Original) Protective circuit according to Claim 1, wherein the second switch unit switches in a further load, when a control signal is present at the input and the control unit is already in operating mode.

4. (Original) Protective circuit according to Claim 1, wherein the first switch unit comprises a transistor stage, which is connected electrically to the input of the control unit.

5. (Original) Protective circuit according to Claim 1, wherein the further load is supplied with energy by the potential converter.

6. (Original) Protective circuit according to Claim 4, wherein the transistor stage comprises a transistor whose load path is coupled in series with a diode and a resistor.

7. (Original) Protective circuit according to Claim 6, wherein the transistor stage is coupled with the input of the potential converter.

8. (Original) Protective circuit according to Claim 7, wherein the transistor is a bipolar transistor whose base is coupled with the output of the potential converter, whose emitter is coupled with the diode, and whose collector is coupled with the control unit.

9. (Original) Protective circuit according to Claim 1, wherein the potential converter is a DC-DC converter.

10. (Original) Protective circuit according to Claim 1, wherein the control unit is a microprocessor unit.

11. (**Currently Amended**) Method for operating a protective circuit, comprising the steps:

- monitoring an input voltage of a potential converter by a switch unit,

- if the voltage exceeds a predetermined threshold voltage, then generating a control signal at an input of a control unit, in response to which the control unit switches in one or more loads at least partially**, when the predetermined threshold voltage is exceeded, the control unit is switched from idle mode to operating mode**.

12. (**Canceled**)

13. (**Currently Amended**) **Method for operating a protective circuit, comprising the steps:**

- monitoring an input voltage of a potential converter by a switch unit,

- if the voltage exceeds a predetermined threshold voltage, then generating a control signal at an input of a control unit, in response to which the control unit switches in one or more loads at least partially ~~**Method according to Claim 11, ,**~~ wherein

when the predetermined threshold voltage is exceeded, a further load is switched in, if the control unit is already in operating mode and/or the monitored voltage requires this.

14. (**NEW**) Protective circuit, in particular for overvoltage protection for an electronic control system for a motor vehicle, comprising:

- a potential converter with an input and an output, which supplies a supply voltage when fed an external voltage,

- a control unit, which is connected electrically to the supply voltage and to earth,

- a first switch unit, which monitors the external voltage and, when a predetermined voltage threshold value is exceeded, generates a control signal at an input of the control unit, and

- a second switch unit, which is part of the control unit and switches in one or more loads at least partially in response to the control signal at the input, wherein the further load is supplied with energy by the potential converter.

15. (**NEW**) Protective circuit according to Claim 14, wherein one switched in load is the control unit, with this being switched from idle mode to operating mode.

16. (**NEW**) Protective circuit according to Claim 14, wherein the second switch unit switches in a further load, when a control signal is present at the input and the control unit is already in operating mode.

17. (**NEW**) Protective circuit according to Claim 14, wherein the first switch unit comprises a transistor stage, which is connected electrically to the input of the control unit.

18. (**NEW**) Protective circuit according to Claim 14, wherein the transistor stage comprises a transistor whose load path is coupled in series with a diode and a resistor.

19. (**NEW**) Protective circuit according to Claim 18, wherein the transistor stage is coupled with the input of the potential converter.

20. (**NEW**) Protective circuit according to Claim 19, wherein the transistor is a bipolar transistor whose base is coupled with the output of the potential converter, whose emitter is coupled with the diode, and whose collector is coupled with the control unit.

21. (**NEW**) Protective circuit according to Claim 14, wherein the potential converter is a DC-DC converter.

22. (**NEW**) Protective circuit according to Claim 14, wherein the control unit is a microprocessor unit.